

UPF International Association of First Ladies for Peace Inauguration in Korea

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Seoul, Korea -- The International Association of First Ladies for Peace (IAFLP) held a successful inaugural world assembly on the important and unique role that first ladies and women leaders play in peacebuilding.

The assembly, which was part of World Summit 2020, was held at the KINTEX Centre outside Seoul on February 5, 2020. Women's Federation for World Peace (WFWP), an organization that is affiliated with UPF, hosted the assembly with Palau first lady Debbie Remengesau, with the support of UPF.



In its statement of purpose, the IAFLP declared it brings together "women leaders from all national, racial and religious backgrounds and all sectors of society, together with those who have lived the responsibility of first ladies in their nations, [uniting] in solidarity to respond to today's challenges. The loving and sacrificial leadership of women working together to empower our youth for goodness, to build cohesive communities and, with men, establish models of ethical and balanced leadership to guide them has never been more critical."

The IAFLP recognizes the central role that women and mothers have played throughout human history. The statement of purpose says: "Women and mothers have always played a central role in supporting their husbands and nurturing and raising their children to be virtuous citizens. They have also been decisive contributors to reconciliation, peacebuilding, reconstruction and development in the wider society and world."

Unanimously passed at the conclusion of the assembly, the IAFLP Resolution stands up for the essential character traits innate to women: "a woman's motherly nature, her empathy toward the vulnerable, her preference to work in consensus, her natural bridge-building instinct, her commitment to peace and to defending social justice, and her consideration for the roles of nurturing and healing."

IAFLP proudly takes its place beside the International Summit Council for World Peace (ISCP) and UPF's core associations, which are dedicated to creating a world that is interdependent, mutually prosperous and based on universally shared values.

Opening Remarks were given by Professor Yeon Ah Moon, the chair of UPF-Korea, and Ms. Julia Moon, president of WFWP and director of the Universal Ballet.



In the session "Special Addresses I: Toward a Culture of Peace and Co-Prosperity: The Role of First Ladies," Madame Debbie Remengesau, first lady of Palau, and Madame Ingrid Aingimea, first lady of Nauru, presented talks.

Mrs. Remengesau, the co-host of the inaugural session, referred to the December gathering in Palau at which the Asia Pacific First Ladies Summit was launched. "We are gathered again today to inaugurate this special session to jumpstart what would become a powerful partnership between first ladies, visionary women and prominent women leaders who share the same desires and ideals to build a future filled with peace, prosperity and stability. ... Let us be encouraged by the fact that as women, our time is now. We must look into ourselves, draw upon that value, and work together as women traditionally would, to create solutions to challenges that threaten our families, our homes and our nations." She closed her remarks with an ancient Palauan chant about coming together to share wisdom and knowledge with one another so that we can all live in harmony and create a peaceful world, "Ko meral mesulang."

Madame Ingrid Aingimea, first lady of Nauru, said, "The critical issues of our time and the thematic areas we must first of all ensure are the values which we hold dear at all times and practice so that goodwill, integrity and kindness and respect are extended at all times." She spoke about the importance of accountability. "A government cannot be seen as democratic if it is not accountable to its people, and that democracy must value people over profits." The core of her remarks had to do with mutual understanding. "In order for us to be able to peacefully advance, we must have mutual understanding as equals. ... When we look beyond power, wealth, status and influence and apply the universal values of peace and goodwill, it becomes a common cause of empowerment and prosperity for our nations."

H.E. Sujata Koirala, former deputy prime minister and foreign minister, Nepal, praised the IAFLP, which "will be led by women in order to foster maternal instincts such as unconditional love, the willingness to sacrifice, forgiveness and sibling harmony. Mother Moon calls this the 'Logic of Love.'" The family is the bedrock of society, she said. "When families are strong, stable and nurture children and grandchildren properly, then the society and the nation benefit."

Among the other speakers and attendees were Madame Lieom Anono Loeak, former first lady of the Marshall Islands; Madame Patricia Marroquín de Argueta, former first lady, Guatemala; and Madame Maria Fernanda Flores, former first lady, Nicaragua.

In the session entitled "Special Addresses II: Identifying Successful Initiatives and the Future of IAFLP," participants heard from Madame Patience Jonathan, former first lady of Nigeria, who said: "Peace is the ground upon which sustainable development is built. It is the atmosphere in which prosperity and other

virtues like love and justice and equality can blossom. This is why everybody has to volunteer to promote peace, no matter our role and status in our societies." She called for gender equality and justice in all spheres of society. "I call on women around the world to stand firm and continue with their task of peacebuilding in their respective nations, no matter the challenges and difficulties they face," she said.



Madame Fionnuala Kenny, wife of the former prime minister of Ireland, described Ireland as a nation which for many years was devastated by poverty and immigration, which left the nation with an enormous diaspora. "There are 6.2 million Irish people on the island of Ireland now, but we have 75 million people around the world who claim Irish heritage," she said.

Mrs. Kenny attributed Ireland's progress and economic growth to its entry into the European Union in 1973. Today Ireland works to support new members, especially less developed nations, to reach their full potential. "You can never underestimate the power of people and countries working together," she said.

Mrs. Kenny described the various presentations and issues at the World Summit as "varied and yet so universal." She praised the new first ladies' association. "For women leaders, particularly for first ladies, who may have little experience in public life, there is great value and importance in a network to call out, encourage, share, bring you on, and show you the power you can have, or that you can use, to make the world a better place for our children."

H.E. Anneli Jäätteenmäki, former prime minister of Finland, addressed the lack of progress in women's participation in decision-making. "Equality in participation and decision-making in society at all levels, from grass-roots to governmental positions, is important," she said. Despite the many advancements and achievements, the former prime minister said "most of the world's illiterates are women, and poverty among women is increasing." She called on civil society and governments to improve these "disturbing signs."

Dr. Svjetlana Jovic of the Civil Affairs office, UN Interim Force in Lebanon (UNIFIL), who has had more than 20 years' experience in UN peacekeeping, peacebuilding and conflict resolution, emphasized the involvement of women in the peace process. Dr. Jovic called upon the participants "to promote core values and to serve as role models to younger generations. ... Young people need someone to look up to and someone who will advocate for their interests: parents, mothers, grandparents, guardians. The more women are seen in positions of power and decision-making, the more positive, holistic and based on empathy these decisions will be."

Among the other attendees were Dr. Emilia Patricia Alfaro de Franco, former first lady and a member of parliament of Paraguay; Dr. Celine Guerin, neuroscientist and trauma therapist, Switzerland; H.E. Dalia Itzik, former president, Israel; Madame Aman Agbomson Klutse, wife of the former prime minister of Togo; Madame Callista Mutharika, former first lady, Malawi; Madame Graciela Rompani, Álvarez Caldeyro Barcia Foundation, Uruguay; Madame Koila Nailatikau, former first lady, Fiji; Madame Bernadette Tong, former first lady, Kiribati; Madame Sitti Abdallah Mwinyi, former first lady, Tanzania; Madame Flutura Ahmeti, wife of the former prime minister, Albania; and Madame Medine Hanku, wife of former president, Albania.

Closing Remarks for the first session were given by Dr. Samia Burton, assistant clinical professor of medicine, George Washington University in the United States, who described the establishment of the IAFLP as "the 'crème de la crème,' the best of the best, as they say in French. The very best of all the associations for peace that were founded by Mother Moon." She thanked Mother Moon for her "vision, commitment, courage and hard work" and praised her family, Dr. Sun Jin Moon and her husband, Dr. In

Sup Park, and Dr. Julia Moon of the Universal Ballet.

The moderator of the second session was Mrs. Angela Selle, president, WFWP USA, who said, "We feel this new association is well off the ground and ready to move to the next level and into action."

Dr. Thomas Walsh, the chair of UPF International, mapped out the plan for collaboration between the IAFLP and UPF.



Following Dr. Walsh, Hon. Faustina Rehurer-Marugg, minister of state, Palau, gave opening remarks, and then Dr. Sun Jin Moon, senior vice president, WFWP International, took to the stage to inspire the IAFLP delegation with her vision and call to action.

Dr. Sun Jin Moon outlined many of the critical issues facing humanity, but most fundamentally, "At the deepest level, there is a crisis of the human heart and conscience. There is a crisis rooted in a failure to understand our true identity."

Dr. Moon said, "We have lost sight of the only solution to all these divisions. The solution requires that we turn our hearts and minds to God. ... It is only when we come to recognize the depth of God's reality, and the divine dignity of each person, that we each can become a light, a compass that shows the way out of the chaos that surrounds us, our families and communities."

Mrs. Blessie Dhakal, president, WFWP Nepal, read the Resolution for the Establishment of IAFLP. In part the Resolution reads, "The loving and sacrificial leadership of women working together to empower our youth for goodness, to build cohesive communities and, with men, establish models of ethical and balanced leadership to guide them has never been more critical."

After a presentation of gifts, congratulatory addresses were given by H.E. Anneli Jäätteenmäki, former prime minister, Finland; H.E. Dalia Itzik, former president, Israel; and Hon. Sujata Koirala, MP and former deputy prime minister, Nepal. The Little Angels Children's Folk Ballet of Korea provided entertainment, and then closing remarks were offered by Madame Koila Nailatikau, former first lady of Fiji.

The session concluded with all 18 former and current first ladies in attendance, alongside WFWP International President Julia Moon, Dr. Sun Jin Moon and Professor Yeon Ah Moon, chair of UPF-Korea, signing the resolution of commitment to work together for peace and to address international cultural and social issues.

The participants and guests expressed their pleasure with the caliber of speakers at the World Summit and in the days following, but mostly with UPF's interdisciplinary approach which supports the UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), while recognizing women's innate qualities and empowering women to take an active role in civil society initiatives and programs in search of solutions to the world's most pressing problems.